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ABSTRACT

This guide, designed to foster self-determination in youths with disabilities, provides a detailed definition of self-determination, a discussion of the skills traditionally identified with self-determination, specific strategies for educators to use in fostering a self-determining environment, and a resource list. Key skills discussed include decision-making, goal-setting, conflict resolution, and communication, with detailed strategies provided for teaching communication and distinguishing between passive, aggressive, and assertive communication. The value of experiential learning is stressed, with suggestions provided for role-playing exercises, real-life experiences, speakers, field trips, and creative activities using videotape and design projects. Tips for making connections with parents, with students, and between students with and without disabilities are provided. The guide concludes with a glossary of key terms, a state-by-state list of self-determination projects, a list of national information and advocacy groups, and a list of print and nonprint materials. (PB)

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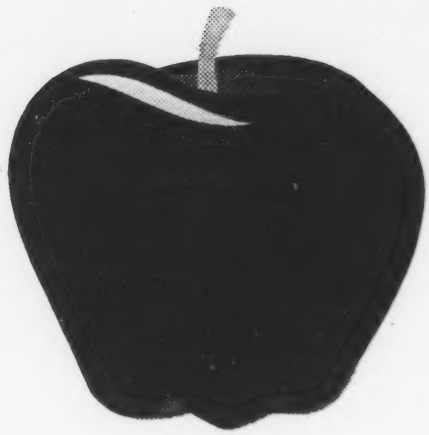

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Table of Contents

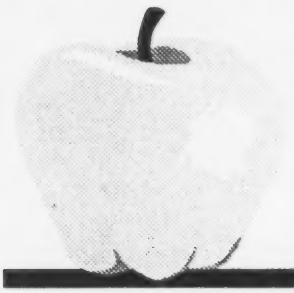
Introduction 2
- Defining Self-Determination 2
- Importance of the Environment 3

Skills Necessary for Self-Determination 5
- Decision-Making 5
- Goal-Setting 6
- Communication 7
- Conflict Resolution 9

Strategies for Fostering Self-Determination 11
- Inside the Classroom 11
  - Real decision-making power for students 11
  - Goal-setting and problem-solving as a class 12
  - Recognizing behavior as communication 13
  - Structure and set-up 13
- Lessons to be Learned 13
  - Self-Advocacy training 13
  - Self-Esteem 14
  - Accessing community resources 14
  - Transitional skills for adult life 14
- The Importance of Experiential Learning 14
  - Role-playing 14
  - Real-life experiences 14
  - Field trips 15
  - Creative expressions 15
- Networking and Making Connections 16
  - With parents 16
  - With others involved 16
  - With students 16
  - Between students with and without disabilities 17

Defining Self-Determination: Key Terms 18

Where to Go from Here—Finding Resources 20
- Self-Determination Projects 20
- Books, Curricula, and Videos 22
- Articles 23
- National Information and Advocacy Groups 24



Introduction

With the positive move toward inclusion, both regular and special educators are facing a multitude of challenges in their classrooms. Challenges include limits of existing organizational structures, the reality that no one educator can control a student's entire life, the continuing demand to maintain high academic standards for all students, and the fact that comprehensive systems change is slow with few if any immediate rewards. Respecting the overwhelming complexities of all of these issues and others, we believe that educators can make a difference, even in the relatively short amount of time they spend with their students. Educators who understand and facilitate self-determination in the classroom are at an advantage in this new environment, better able to face the challenges now before them. This manual offers a variety of useful strategies for educators to foster self-determination, giving them the tools they need to be successful.

This guide is one of the products created by the *Self-Determination Through Group Action Planning* project of Full Citizenship, Inc. The project was funded by the United States Department of Education as a model demonstration project designed to foster self-determination in youths with disabilities, ages 14 to 21. Our project included two major components: a semester elective course taught at the high school level and an innovative planning process called Group Action Planning. This guide focuses on information and strategies gained from the class developed for the project.

This guide provides a detailed definition of self-determination, a discussion of the skills traditionally identified with self-determination, specific strategies for educators to use in fostering a self-determining environment, and a comprehensive resource list. This is not a curriculum. Rather, it is a functional guide for educators, one that they can use in their classrooms today. Our project, and therefore this guide, is designed especially for students with disabilities, in either inclusive or segregated settings. However, we feel strongly that this guide will be a beneficial tool for all students and all educators. To provide a solid foundation, we will begin by defining the term self-determination.

Defining Self-Determination

In the following paragraphs, we will outline our working definition of self-determination. We have also defined each of the specific components of our concept of self-determination. On page 18, readers can find a glossary of key terms. After defining self-determination, we will offer strategies for implementation.

Self-determination is a system of attitudes, skills, and relationships that develop over time and which are dynamic and fluid.

For an individual, self-determination consists of, but is not limited to, interdependence, self-regulation, knowledge and acceptance of self, the ability to learn from experiences, internal motivation to learn and utilize skills such as communication, goal-setting, decision-making, and conflict resolution, and most importantly the perception of control and choice in one's life. In the environment, the expression of self-determination is enhanced by responsive, informative, and non-judgmental feedback, the negotiation of constructive limits, the creation of situations that are optimally challenging for the individual, effective communication strategies, and the provision of non-controlling support.

Importance of the Environment

The environment, or the context in which the student lives, is as critical as the individual in fostering self-determination because the environment and the individual are interdependent. Characteristics of the environment can either facilitate or hinder the demonstration of acquired skills. By facilitating students' acquisition of skills that promote self-determination and creating a supportive environment in the classroom, teachers can establish a positive working relationship between the individual and the environment. When students experience success, it increases their perception of personal abilities and expectations for future successes. Students who are equipped with more skills and have more experience in effective decision-making, communication, and problem-solving will be more successful in supportive environments.

In addition to the classroom environment, one's culture frames both the definition of self-determination and the process of becoming self-determined. Self-determination is, as defined in the literature, in many ways a "white, western, linear, and product oriented" concept[1] that consequently needs to be culturally reframed to better fit minority students with disabilities and their families. While limited space does not allow us to do justice to all the issues surrounding diversity, we will present some guidelines that have been helpful to us in reframing the concepts of self-determination.

- Considering the students and their families' cultural context, including number of generations living in the dominant culture, family composition, and supports within their community is helpful in reframing self-determination. Are the self-determination skills the students are learning congruent with their cultural values? Will these skills be appreciated as self-determination when expressed in a culturally relevant manner?

- Staying flexible in the expectations and presentation of problem-solving strategies is important, for individual families may approach problems, set goals, and make decisions in unique ways. Honoring how the family has successfully initiated positive change in the past is the best predictor of future success. What has worked? Who have been the key players? Identifying the unique change process of a given family may not be easy. Reflecting on the family's context and responding in a manner congruent with the family's values may facilitate this identification.

- Finally, teachers can recognize how students' culturally-relevant skills can be used successfully within the dominant, mainstream culture. We believe that "...minority students with disabilities..., like their parents and families, stand with one

foot in their family culture and another foot in the dominant culture"[2]. How can individuals and their families successfully utilize newly-acquired skills in the larger social context while still acknowledging the validity of their family-cultural context? Facilitating an adaptation to the dominant culture while preserving family-cultural traditions is a complicated task for educators, often requiring creativity and a willingness to learn about students' families and cultures from the students themselves. Interestingly, such an approach benefits students and educators from both dominant and minority contexts by widening the array of perspectives and options available.

In summary, educators have the opportunity to teach students the skills necessary for self-determination as well as the capability to provide a supportive environment. Our goal is to complement teachers' current efforts by offering new and alternative strategies for fostering self-determination. We have outlined necessary skills and strategies in the following sections.

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[1] MacGugen, M. K. (1991). Self-determination and cultural relevance. Albuquerque, NM: Protection and Advocacy System. p.3.

[2] MacGugen, M. K. (1991). Self-determination and cultural relevance. Albuquerque, NM: Protection and Advocacy System. p. 6.

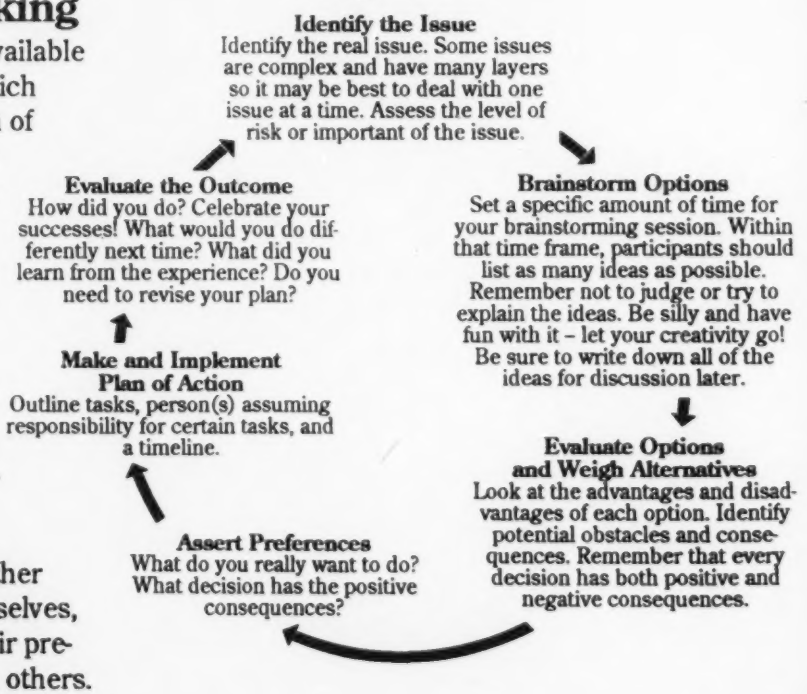
Skills Necessary for Self-Determination

There are several skills traditionally identified with the concept of self-determination, and all are vital tools for students. Basic skills such as decision-making, goal-setting, communication, and conflict resolution are important aspects of self-determination. Students who possess these skills are more likely to be successful in every area of life, even in environments which are not supportive. Following are brief descriptions of these important skill elements of self-determination.

Decision-Making

There are many resources available on decision-making, many of which are listed in the resource section of this guide. We have outlined a simple process that students car learn and use as they refine their decision-making skills (see Figure 1). While students are ultimately responsible for this process and its outcome, teachers can prompt consecutive steps and ensure that all of the options have been identified. As students learn and work through the decision-making process with educators, they gather valuable knowledge about themselves, their desires and needs, and their preferred modes of interacting with others. They also create situations and experiences where they will gather valuable knowledge about their ability to implement the decision-making process. Possessing decision-making skills provides students with a method for responding to experiences of success or failure. This framework facilitates increased control and choice in the students' lives. Students are encouraged to make decisions in a personal and meaningful way. Whether they experience success or failure, they have acquired skills they can use throughout their lives.

Figure 1


Identify the Issue
Identify the real issue. Some issues are complex and have many layers so it may be best to deal with one issue at a time. Assess the level of risk or important of the issue.
Brainstorm Options
Set a specific amount of time for your brainstorming session. Within that time frame, participants should list as many ideas as possible. Remember not to judge or try to explain the ideas. Be silly and have fun with it – let your creativity go! Be sure to write down all of the ideas for discussion later.
Evaluate Options and Weigh Alternatives
Look at the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Identify potential obstacles and consequences. Remember that every decision has both positive and negative consequences.
Assert Preferences
What do you really want to do? What decision has the positive consequences?
Make and Implement Plan of Action
Outline tasks, person(s) assuming responsibility for certain tasks, and a timeline.
Evaluate the Outcome
How did you do? Celebrate your successes! What would you do differently next time? What did you learn from the experience? Do you need to revise your plan?

Goal-Setting

Goal-setting takes students from the classroom to the future. Educators can work with students to help the students envision their future and gain the skills to achieve that vision. Students can work on the goal-setting process either with short-term or long-term goals. Educators can facilitate the process with the following easy steps. Encourage students to envision the process, working their way back from their vision to their current situation.

• Identify the Goal

Teachers and students should spend a lot of time envisioning the future. Educators can ask students, "What are your dreams?" "Where do you want to be five years from now?" Let go, create a perfect world and dream of the future. With the vision in the forefront of everyone's minds, trace the way back to today. Tie a string to the vision so as not to lose it and work back. Goals should be achievable, but that does not mean traditional or limited.

• Identify Objectives

Educators can ask students, "How do you get to your vision?" "What things need to happen now? Six months from now? Next year? By graduation?" "Are there primary or immediate concerns that need to be dealt with right away, or is there a need for steady movement along a certain path?" "How do we get there from here?" Prioritize goals and remain flexible, allow for change or modification. This is a supportive and safe time to try something new.

• Identify Key Players

Looking at each goal and objective, identify key supporters. Teachers can ask, "Who do you know that can help you achieve your goals? Family members? Teachers? Friends? Counselors?" Don't be afraid to invite new people to support the student. A broader support system provides more support, resources, options, and a variety of perspectives. Inviting more supporters to be involved is often beneficial.

• Timeline

Outline a reasonable and achievable timeline to meet goals and objectives. The timeline needs to be realistic, and people should know they will be held accountable for their part of the plan. It is often helpful to put deadlines in writing, knowing that the plan can be revised as needed.

• Possible "Knots in the String" and How to Untie Them

Identify potential "knots" that could interfere with students' visions of the future and their identified goals. Consider any obstacles early in the process and identify possible solutions so as not to get "tied up." Utilize resources and the support system that has been developed. Everyone runs into "snares." Don't see a snare as a failure but as an opportunity for growth and a chance to learn more about the process.

• Create and Implement Plan of Action

After envisioning the process, make it a reality! Create the plan of action, and "lasso" that goal!

Communication

Effective communication skills facilitate the expression of self-determination by allowing students to express their needs, wants, and desires in a manner that increases the likelihood that their requests will be honored. Effective communication is clear, direct, honest, and fair to self and others. Three styles of communication are generally described in the literature: assertive, passive, and aggressive.

• Assertive Communication

Assertive communication is generally the most effective way to communicate and involves standing up for your rights in a way that demonstrates respect for the rights of others. It is an honest, direct, and appropriate expression of feelings and opinions. It communicates respect rather than submission. Interpersonal feedback is focused on behavior rather than criticism of the person. Pearson (1992) describes assertiveness as "...display[ing] us at our 'best' when we are feeling comfortable in ourselves. We feel self respect and respect for those around us. We realise we are ordinary human beings full of contradictions and work toward being open about them as well as trying to 'do better next time.'"[3]

• Passive Communication

Passive communication is "...characterized by our avoiding taking responsibility for making choices[3]." Often passive communication accompanies being withdrawn from, or feeling hurt and frustrated because goals have not been achieved.

• Aggressive Communication

Aggressive communication "...occurs when we may be too forceful and put other people down. We may be seeking personal aggrandisement and thus belittle others' thoughts and values. It is a behavior which expects to be superior"[3]. Aggression is frequently an over-reaction resulting from pent-up anger. Expressing angry feelings when they occur is assertive. Holding other people responsible for anger or humiliating them because you are angry is aggressive behavior.

• LADDER

There are many strategies for teaching assertive communication[4,3]. Teachers may want to explore several of these strategies to identify the best approach for their students. We will briefly outline one helpful approach described in ***The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook***[5]. This approach has six key components that are represented by the pneumonic, **LADDER**:

Look at your rights, what you want, what you need, and your feeling about the situation.

Arrange a convenient time and place to discuss your problem with the other person.

Define the problem situation as clearly as you can.

Describe how you feel about the situation using "I messages."

Express your request in a few, clear, concise, but firm statements.

Reinforce the possibility of getting your request met by highlighting the benefits the other person will receive by cooperating.

The **LADDER** approach is helpful in that it offers a structure or script that students can use in a variety of situations. Offering examples illustrating the use of this approach and then role-playing difficult situations can be a fun and useful classroom activity (see the Sample Assertive-

ness Role-play Scenario below. Students may feel more comfortable when teachers actively participate in roll-plays. Role-playing scripts in class provides students with practice and feedback before venturing out with their new assertive behaviors!

Nonverbal and Verbal Behaviors Associated with Passive, Assertive, and Aggressive Communication

	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Emotion	Anxiety, guilt, depression, fear, hurt, fatigue	Confidence, high self-esteem	Guilt, hurt, built-up anger, rage, hostility
Non-Verbal Clues	Downcast, averted, teary eyes Slumped body, shoulders drooped, head down, shuffled walk, wringing hands, biting lips, nervous gestures Monotone, apologetic voice, mumbling, whining, hesitant, giggly, moving away	Open, direct, non-staring eye contact Standing comfortably but firmly on two feet, steady, hands loosely at sides, relaxed Strong, steady, firm, clear tone of voice	Glaring, narrowed, expressionless eyes Leaning forward, stiff, rigid posture Clenched fists, jerky movements, finger pointing, hands on hips, raised, haughty tone of voice
Verbal Clues	Rambling statements, qualifiers (maybe, sort of), fillers (uh, well, you know) Negatives (oh don't bother, it's not important)	Concise statements, "I" statements, cooperative words (*Let's think of how we can resolve this*) Empathetic, statements of interest (*What do you think?, What do you feel about . . . ?*)	Clipped, interrupting statements Threats (*You'd better. . ., If you don't watch out . . .*) calling names, demanding, accusing, put-downs, judgmental, sarcastic, evaluative comments (should, bad), sexist or racist terms

Sample Assertiveness Role-playing Scenario

Your friend has just arrived an hour late for dinner. She did not call to let you know that she would be detained. You are annoyed about her lateness. You say:

a. Come on in, dinner's already on the table.
b. I've been waiting for an hour. I would have appreciated your calling to let me know you would be late.
c. You've got a lot of nerve showing up this late! That is the last time I'll ever invite you to anything!

Answer key: (a) Passive (b) Assertive (c) Aggressive

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is inevitable between students in any classroom. Disagreements and misunderstandings provide an excellent opportunity to practice conflict resolution skills. Problem solving is negotiation. Sears (1994) defines negotiation as a "back and forth discussion designed to reach an agreement when both parties have interests, some shared, some in opposition." She explains that it is a process which yields results "beneficial to both parties, results which preserve the relationship, and results that are better than an imposed solution." Good negotiation requires preparation, communication skills, and a good negotiation model.[6]

Before Negotiating . . .

- Be prepared before entering into the negotiation.
- Identify your interests. What do you perceive as the real issues? What do you hope to gain by going through this process?
- What are the other person's interests?
- What do they perceive as the real issues? What do they hope to gain?
- How have you successfully negotiated in the past? What has worked for you? This is your negotiation style. Know your strengths and weaknesses before entering the process. Know the other person's negotiation style as well.
- What's your time frame? Are you under a deadline?
- Develop your strategy before entering into the negotiation.

During the Negotiation . . .

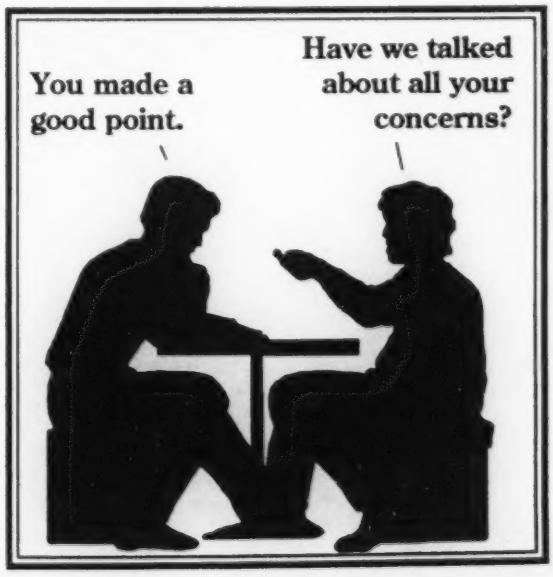
- Open the discussion by stating your interests and agreeing on the ground rules for discussion.
- Explore both your needs and theirs, share information, listen, acknowledge each other's perspective, ask questions.
- Explore options, get beyond the first few ideas, keep an open mind.
- Summarize the key points, decide on the next steps and a timeline for results.

After the Negotiation . . .

- Evaluate the process.
- Let it go. Work with the solution. At some point you may re-enter the "negotiation arena," but for now try out what was agreed upon.

Common Mistakes

- Perception that the other side has all of the control and power.
- Not recognizing your own strengths.
- Getting "hung up" on one issue or one aspect of the process.
- Failing to see more than one option.
- Having win/lose mentality.
- Short-term thinking.
- Accepting an opinion or feeling as fact.
- Accepting a position as final.
- Talking too much, listening too little.
- Being in a hurry.



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Getting Started...
Discussion Suggestions

- Tackle the easy issues first.
- Acknowledge without committing:
  "You make a good point."
  "I have not looked at it that way."
- Present other viewpoints without attack:
  "Yes ... and" (instead of yes, but)
  "Critics of your position would say... "
  "How would you respond?"
- If you disagree, give a reason and restate your interest.
- Offer choices between alternatives. Avoid offering choice between something and nothing.
  Test the waters. Give others an opportunity to voice objections.
  "Have we talked about all of your concerns?"
- Allow for face-saving — permit others to act in accord with their principles, past words and deeds.
- Stress the desirability of reaching an agreement.
- Present both sides of the issue instead of just one.

---

[3] Pearson, V. (1992). Women and power: Gaining back control. Sheffield, England: PAVIC Publications.

[4] Alberti, R. E., & Emmons, M. L. (1987). Your perfect right: A guide to assertive living. San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact Publishers.

[5] Davis, M., Eshelman, E. R., & McKay, M. (1992). The relaxation and stress reduction workbook. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

[6] Adapted from information presented by Jolanta Sears, Program Director, Employer Education Services, Industrial Relations Center, Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN (1994).

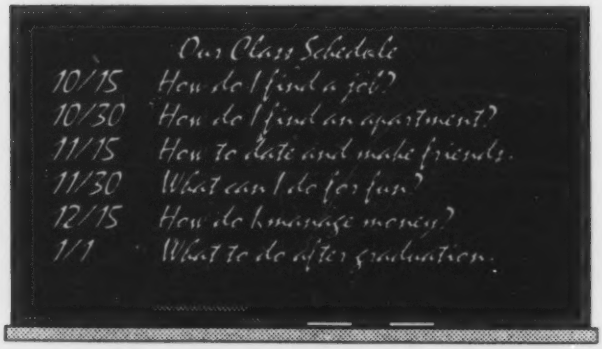
Strategies for Fostering Self-Determination

The following section offers specific strategies for fostering self-determination. Strategies are organized according to suggestions for inside the classroom, the role of experiential learning and trips outside the classroom, and making connections between students, families, and others.

Inside the Classroom

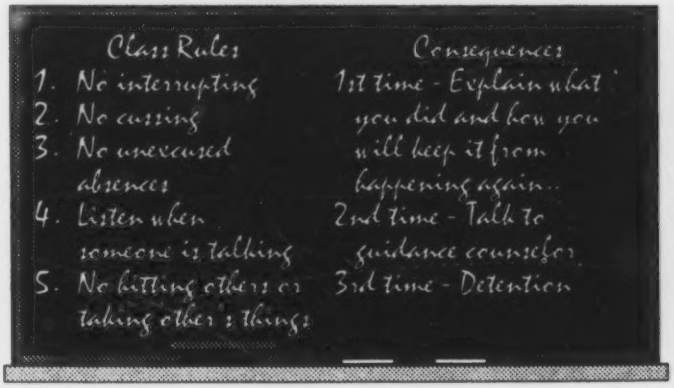
Real Decision-Making Power for Students

• Allow as much decision-making power for students as possible. When possible, let students decide what they will study and learn, if not for the entire semester maybe a portion of it, or one day a week. Let students choose between two or three things that they need to study. Students can also choose the order in which the class will study the topics.


Our Class Schedule
10/15 How do I find a job?
10/30 How do I find an apartment?
11/15 How to date and make friends.
11/30 What can I do for fun?
12/15 How do I manage money?
1/1 What to do after graduation.

• Allow students to be responsible for a certain lesson plan. Give students the topic and certain guidelines which they need to follow, and let them plan and teach the class a certain topic.

• Let students be responsible for the classroom environment. Let them decide what is appropriate classroom behavior and what the consequences will be if rules are broken. Surprisingly, students often come up with harsher consequences than teachers.


Class Rules
1. No interrupting
2. No cursing
3. No unexcused absences
4. Listen when someone is talking
5. No hitting others or taking other's things
Consequences
1st time - Explain what you did and how you will keep it from happening again.
2nd time - Talk to guidance counselor
3rd time - Detention

• Allow for decision-making and problem-solving opportunities at every chance. Acknowledging students' control and responsibility in the classroom environment communicates and affirms their investment in the process, ownership of the outcome, and mutual respect.

• Utilize students as contributors and leaders. If students express an interest in a certain topic or show expertise in a certain

skill area, allow them to lead a discussion or a role-play for the rest of the class. Have students work with other students who are having a harder time learning that topic or skill.

• Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings are an excellent place for students to practice their self-determination skills. The IEP should incorporate many of the major skills and concepts associated with self-determination, such as goal-setting, decision-making, communication, and conflict resolution. Other self-determination projects have designed curricula specifically addressing the IEP process (please refer to our resource section on page 20).

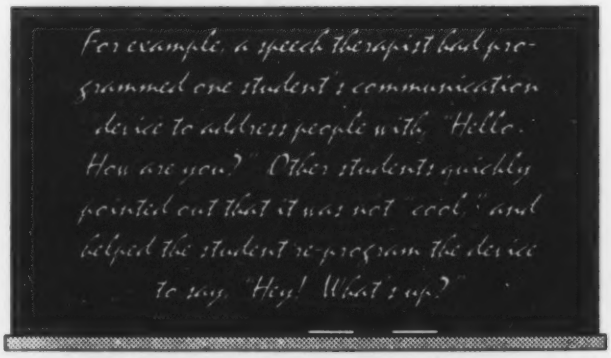
• Consider providing the opportunity for students to participate as teaching assistants for future classes. This benefits both the teaching assistant and the students; it gives the teaching assistant a chance to be a positive role model for peers, and it allows the students to witness the benefits of becoming more self-determined.

Goal-Setting and Problem-Solving as a Class

Set goals and objectives for the class. As examples, set a goal to achieve an overall class effort, set a goal to cover a certain amount of topics, or set a goal for attendance. The class could also set a desired amount of hours to volunteer, to participate in a parade or a competition. The goal can be anything the class can do as a whole or that the class can celebrate together.

• If the class has a problem or an issue arises, take time to go through the problem-solving process as a class. If the class is not completing homework, if a class is too noisy, or some other issue is disrupting the class, work together to find the solution. Make the class as a whole responsible for solving the issue.

• Group goal-setting and problem-solving can be especially useful if there is a student with a disability who is new to the class or who is having a hard time adapting to the new environment. Teachers and key players can meet prior to the class meeting to discuss a variety of issues, explore their feelings about a given situation, and assess the benefits and risks of all options. The student may choose not to be involved in the initial meeting if the environment is hostile or if participation might be detrimental. Often, other students can ease the transition for a student with a disability. Discussing how the class as a whole can ensure a smooth transition for all members may be helpful. Students with communication issues may benefit from problem-solving with their new classmates about programming their communication devices — what "lingo" and phrases will be most helpful for a given class. Open discussions and pre-planning can promote successful inclusion.


For example, a speech therapist had pre-
grammed one student's communication
device to address people with "Hello.
How are you?" Other students quickly
pointed out that it was not "cool," and
helped the student re-program the device
to say "Hey! What's up?"

• Don't forget to celebrate successes! Acknowledging accomplishments is very important. Celebrating helps motivate everyone and keeps them moving toward

their goals. Even if progress is slow, be sure to recognize even the smallest accomplishments. Plan a party as a class, or have a special system of rewards for students. Be sure to give the students the encouragement that they need.

Recognizing Behavior as Communication

• Recognizing behavior as communication is important. Students communicate in many different ways. Educators need creativity, flexibility, and patience in order to understand the messages behind the behaviors. If a student is acting out, is he telling us that he is frustrated? Is he having a hard time following the lesson? If a student is late to class, is she telling us that she is lost? Or is she having a hard time adapting to her new schedule or new environment? Consider the student's behavior from a number of perspectives before attributing motivations or making assumptions. What is the student's point of view? Take a holistic look at the situation and evaluate all possible factors. What is the student really trying to say?

• Once educators understand what the student is trying to communicate, they may need to adjust their actions. Maybe an alternative approach is needed. Maybe a different way of providing feedback would help. Work with the student, the family, and others involved to find a solution.

For example, a student was consistently late to lunch because he was "dawdling" in the bathroom, and then "acting out" in the lunchroom. A teacher realized he might not be enjoying lunch because all his friends ate at a different time. She helped him re-arrange his schedule. He now races to the lunchroom and eats happily with his friends.

Structure and Set-up

• Place chairs in a large circle in the middle of the classroom. Sitting in a circle, including the teachers and all other assistants, allows for open and non-hierarchical communication.

• Ensure that the environment is comfortable and accessible for all students. Students who use wheelchairs or other assistive technologies may need more room to get around, and the traditional set-up with desks placed in narrow rows may not be conducive to their participation and involvement in the class.

• Use time creatively. Are there times during the class period that are better for certain activities? Should a difficult lesson be broken into smaller chunks? Consider using the beginning of the class as a debriefing time or as a time to talk about the day's or week's events.

Lessons to be Learned

Self-Advocacy Training

• Self-advocacy involves speaking up for your rights, speaking up for yourself and others. The self-advocacy movement is analogous to the civil rights movement in that it has been an active and dynamic force for initiating positive change in the lives of people with disabilities. Study the self-advocacy movement and the advances the disability community has made.

• There are many local self-advocacy groups as well as state coalitions and national organizations. Invite members from a self-advocacy group to speak to the class or lead a discussion about individual rights.

Self-advocates often have powerful stories to share with students.

• In recent years people have developed curriculum and training guides for self-advocacy. These guides could be beneficial tools in the classroom. Educators and students can explore existing self-advocacy groups in their communities or start a self-advocacy group at their school.

Self-Esteem

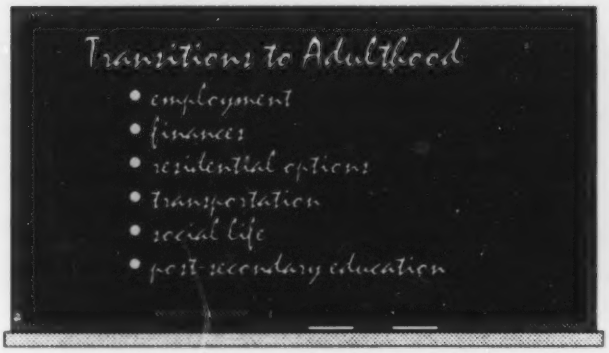
• Self-esteem and self-determination go hand in hand. One of the primary influences on self-esteem is the experience of meeting high standards and overcoming obstacles through personal effort. There are many ways to enhance positive self-esteem (see the resource section, page 20). Encourage expression of ideas, notice and affirm special talents, communicate acceptance, respect privacy, space, and possessions, provide opportunities for students to express what they think are special characteristics about themselves, and help them find effective ways to express themselves [7].

Accessing Community Resources

• Do your students know how to access community resources? Do they know how to find an apartment, a bank, emergency services or crisis intervention agencies? The ability to access the community is a tool all students need. Consider including a community resources component in all appropriate lessons.

Transitional Skills for Adult Life

• Students entering adulthood face a number of transitions. Acquiring skills pertaining to employment, finances, residential options, transportation, and social relationships lead to a more successful life after high school. Teachers can work with students while they are still in school to prepare for the challenges they will soon face.



The Importance of Experiential Learning

Role-playing

• Role-playing provides students with the opportunity to experiment and explore new skills in a safe environment. Watching others role-play and participating in role-playing is an excellent way to learn. Role-playing should be used as often as possible to demonstrate a new skill or behavior. For instance, if the class has set some new rule, role-playing a relevant situation can help assess the effectiveness of their plan of action.

Real-life experiences

• Draw your lesson plans from the day-to-day struggles and accomplishments of your students. Concepts drawn from these experiences are concrete and real, not abstract or meaningless. Remember students are more likely to be internally motivated if they perceive the lesson or skill to be meaningful.

• Outside speakers can be another beneficial tool in the classroom. There are many community agencies and resources that

educators can use as speakers to enhance a lesson. Community agencies, local law officers, government officials, other students or faculty, and other groups or individuals can come to the classroom to speak on a topic. Many agencies have speaker bureaus or panels that would love to speak to a group of students. This is a wonderful way to enhance any lesson in the classroom.

• Non-fiction articles or books are another resource educators can call on to provide a real-life perspective. If students express interest, suggest a book or an article that relates to the topic or lesson being reviewed. Follow the reading with either large or small group discussions, bringing the authors' experiences into the classroom and the students' lives.

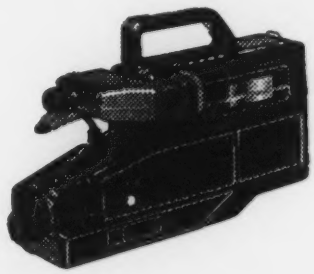
• Educators can make up games and activities which creatively bring the lesson to life. One game we used in the classroom was called "The Bank Game." Students earned "dollars" for attendance. Each student received a "paycheck" at the end of the month. Each student then endorsed and deposited their "paycheck," balanced their "checkbooks," and purchased what they could afford at our "store." We provided fun things the students could buy, and there were stiff penalties if a student bounced a check! It was a great way for students to work on practical math skills.

Field trips

• Traveling outside of the classroom can be a wonderful addition to any lesson plan. Field trips to local businesses can enhance a lesson on employment, a supermarket is a wonderful place to learn basic math, the capitol or city government buildings can be helpful with civics or history, and any natural setting or park is a great place for geography or biology. Explore your community with your students, incorporating as much as you can into every lesson.

Creative Expressions

• Video cameras offer students a chance to express themselves in many different ways. Using video in the classroom gives students a chance to express their creativity, either behind the camera or in front of it. Students can choose to use the camera for personal expression or to express a skill they have learned from the class. Videos also double as communication strategies. Students can show their video to whomever they choose, and if the class works on a video together, they can show it to other classes and faculty, their friends and family and more. Use the video as a project and show it to the whole school — show off your new environment, your new skills, your collective self-determination.

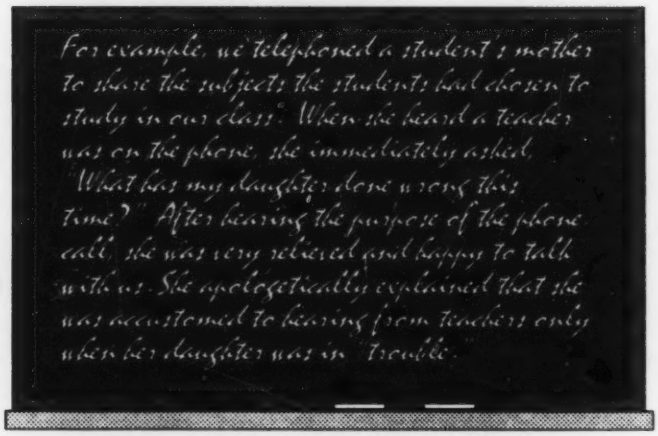


• Another form of creative expression can be in the form of design and writing. Give the students a notebook and have them design a cover that expresses who they are. Students can draw or make a collage by cutting pictures and words out of magazines. Inside the notebooks, students can collect their homework, lessons, information that is of particular interest to them, handouts, and journals of their progress toward self-determination.

Networking and Making Connections

With Parents

• Families are a critical success factor in the equation of self-determination. The relationship between educators and parents is important, especially when the student has a disability. For students to succeed, family members must be supported and given the information and tools *they* need to succeed. We understand that sometimes it can be very difficult to have regular communication with families, especially when the family is isolated and has been left out of the educational process in the past. Frequently these families require consistent and respectful contact in order to establish trust with teachers and other service providers. Fostering a supportive relationship with the parents and other family members is possible.


For example, we telephoned a student's mother to share the subjects the students had chosen to study in our class. When she heard a teacher was on the phone, she immediately asked, "What has my daughter done wrong this time?" After hearing the purpose of the phone call, she was very relieved and happy to talk with us. She apologetically explained that she was accustomed to hearing from teachers only when her daughter was in trouble.

• There are many strategies teachers can employ to build a relationship with the family. Notebooks sent home with messages for the family and sent back to school with messages for the educators, regular phone calls, attending planning meetings, parent-teacher conferences, home visits, attending parent organization meetings, and inviting the parents to the school are a few suggestions upon which to build.

• Parent-teacher conferences can be a great opportunity to have the students involved and to build a relationship with the entire family. Have students plan parent-teacher conferences. Each student can outline strengths. The class as a whole can plan for refreshments, decorations, and whatever else they would like their parents to see at the conference. Educators can meet with the families, who are much more willing to come when their son or daughter is involved, to discuss the class and their child's progress.

With Others Involved

• Often there are outside people who provide support to students. Educators can access support networks to help them work with the students. Students with disabilities often have a planning team or a group of people identified to help with their education plan. Educators can attend their planning sessions or IEP meetings or contact other group members for support.

• Community organizations and others outside the school can also play a key role in supporting both the educator and the student. Be sure to access all available resources for the classroom.

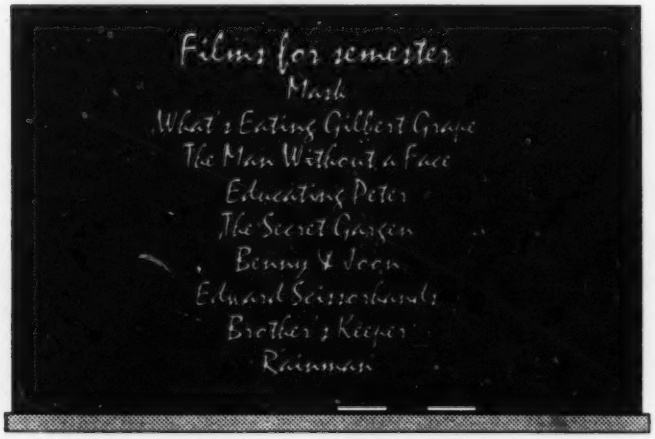
With Students

• Accessing student organizations within the school is a good way to network with students and peers. Student organizations offer a structured way for students to interact. Students make connections through common interests, therefore expanding their social network and resources. Participation in student organizations provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate skills and strengths that may not be observed in the classroom.

• Students have a multitude of recreational opportunities available outside the classroom. Educators can facilitate relationships with students outside the classroom by announcing upcoming activities, giving students credit for participating, or providing special supports to make these activities accessible. Often, a little creativity and problem-solving can open opportunities for students with disabilities to expand their horizons.

Between Students With and Without Disabilities

• Exploring disability awareness through popular films is a wonderful way to facilitate an open and honest discussion of disability-related issues. After watching a movie, the class can discuss major themes and relevant issues. This process helps students with and without disabilities experience disability in a safe context. Students with disabilities are able to experience disability from a more objective perspective, giving students a broader understanding of themselves and their abilities. Students without disabilities gain understanding, insight, empathy, appreciation, and respect for others with disabilities.



• Use team-building exercises to encourage cohesion. Students become united to obtain goals and discover solutions. Given a common goal, students learn to work together. They then are able to generalize those skills and experiences into the classroom and beyond.

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[7]Bean, R. (1992). The four conditions of self esteem: A new approach for elementary and middle schools (2nd ed.). Santa Cruz, CA: ETR Associates.

Defining Self-Determination: Key Terms

Self-Determination:

Self-determination is a system of attitudes, skills, and relationships that develop over time and which are dynamic and fluid. For an individual, self-determination consists of, but is not limited to interdependence, self-regulation, knowledge and acceptance of self, the ability to learn from experiences, internal motivation to learn and utilize skills such as communication, goal-setting, decision-making, and conflict resolution, and most importantly the perception of control and choice in one's life. In the environment, the expression of self-determination is enhanced by responsive, informative, and non-judgmental feedback, the negotiation of constructive limits, the creation of situations that are optimally challenging for the individual, effective communication strategies, and the provision of non-controlling support.

Attitudes:

Beliefs about one's self-efficacy, the expectation that one's behavior will lead to a certain outcome, perception of contingency between personal actions and outcomes.

Skills:

Problem-solving, decision-making, goal-attainment, assertive communication, self-organization.

Relationships:

Systems of support, circles of friends, family, and others.

Dynamic and Fluid:

Changes over time, relationships are interactive, process is developmental, a lifetime process that waxes and wanes.

Interdependence:

Individual is neither completely dependent nor isolated, but acknowledges and accepts the need for support from others; he or she is able to maintain a sense of self within the context of reciprocal support. Person actively seeks out appropriate support from others.

Self-regulation:

The individual is able to govern himself or herself. The person who is self-determining uses information and knowledge to regulate himself or herself in pursuit of self-selected goals. Whitman[8] (1990) defined self-regulation as a "complex response system that enables individuals to examine their environments and their repertoires of responses for coping with those environments to make decisions about how to act, to act, to evaluate the desirability of the outcomes of the action, and to revise their plans as necessary" (p. 373).

Knowledge of Self:

Ability to recognize strengths, weaknesses, preferences, attributes, and characteristics of self.

Acceptance of Self :

Possessing self-knowledge as well as affirming, appreciating, valuing, honoring, and/or respecting oneself. Guess, Benson, and Siegel-Causey[9] (1985) suggested that the opportunity for choices and decision-making "reflects favorably upon one's perceived independence, dignity and self-worth...." (p. 79).

The Ability to Learn from Experiences:

Ability to respond to success or failure in an adaptive manner that encourages further experimentation and risk-taking but from a more informed position.

Internal Motivation to Learn and Utilize the Skills Traditionally Identified with Self-Determination:

Internal motivation, not to be confused with intrinsic or innate motivation, is the desire within the individual to achieve goals, make changes, and/or initiate movement in order to meet the individual's needs or wants. Students need to be motivated to problem solve, to set goals, and to communicate more effectively. They must perceive these skills as beneficial and useful in their lives.

Perception of Control and Choice in One's Life:

The perception, optimally but not always the reality, that one has the power to regulate and direct one's life and that one has the power to select among various options. Perception of lack of control can have detrimental effects on task performance [10]. The belief that a person can determine his or her fate is critical in determining the ways in which he or she copes with stress and meets challenges [11].

Responsive Feedback:

Replying to student's verbal communication and/or behaviors in a sensitive manner that demonstrates an attempt to understand the student's intent prior to replying.

Non-Judgmental Feedback:

Replying to student's verbal communication and/or behaviors without finding fault, blaming, or criticizing.

Informative Feedback:

Replying to student's verbal communication and/or behaviors by providing knowledge that will benefit the student in achieving his/her goals.

Negotiation of Constructive Limits:

Interacting with the student in defining roles, rules, and boundaries in which that individual lives. These limits let the person feel safe and cared for while still providing opportunities to experience and learn from success and failure.

Creation of Situations that are Optimally Challenging for the Individual:

Providing decision-making and problem-solving situations that challenge the person, facilitate growth, and foster self-determination. Involves structuring the environment in a way that (1) exceeds student's present level of functioning while still being within the student's ability to succeed, and (2) ensures a multitude of choices including student-initiated activities and choices.

Effective Communication Strategies:

Ability and willingness to express needs, wants, opinions, concerns in an assertive manner, as opposed to a passive or aggressive manner, while maintaining respect for other's needs, wants, opinions, concerns.

Provision of Non-Controlling Support:

Providing information, assistance, and encouragement for person's visions, goals and objectives without imposing restrictions, restraints, and/or influence based on another's personal agenda.

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[8] Whitman, T. L. (1990). Development of self-regulation in persons with mental retardation. American Journal on Mental Retardation, 94, 373-376.

[9] Guess, D., Benson, H. A., & Siegel-Causey, E. (1985). Concepts and issues related to choice-making and autonomy among persons with severe disabilities. Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 10, 79-86.

[10] Wehmeyer, M. L. (1992). Self-determination and the education of students with mental retardation. Education and Training in Mental Retardation, 12, 302-314.

Where to Go from Here: Finding Resources

Self-Determination Projects

Alaska

Increasing Skills Necessary for Self-Determination Through Video-Based Personal Futures Planning
Kathy Ben and John Micks
Center for Human Development: UAP
2330 Nichols Street
Anchorage, AK 99508
(907) 274-6814
(907) 272-8270

Arizona

Project Pride
Marguerite D. Harmon, MS
Community Outreach Program for the Deaf
268 W. Adams
Tucson, AZ 85705
(602) 792-1906

California

Independence Through Responsible Choices
Beverly Huff
Irvine Unified School District
5050 Barranca Parkway
Irvine, CA 92714
(714) 733-1345

Project Capable, Able and Dependable
Stephen Hofmann, MS
West Contra Costa Unified School District/Transition Department
2465 Dolan Way
San Pablo, CA 94806
(510) 741-2892

Colorado

Choice Maker Self-Determination Transition Project
James Martin and Laura Huber Marshall
University of Colorado at Colorado Springs
Center for Educational Research
P. O. Box 7150
Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7150
(719) 593-3627 (Martin)
(719) 593-3540 (Marshall)

Sharing the Journey
Jean Lehmann
Colorado State University
Education Building, Room 205
Fort Collins, CO 80623
(303) 491-5169

Hawaii

Self-Determination in Integrated Settings
Dr. Robert Stodden
University of Hawaii
UAP & Department of Special Education
1776 University Avenue, UA 4-6
Honolulu, HI 96822
(808) 956-5009

Illinois

Mainroads to Self-Determination
Kathryn Moery
Family Resource Center on Disabilities
20 East Jackson Boulevard, Room 900
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 939-3513

Developing Self-Determination in Youth
Pamela F. Miller
Southern Illinois University-Carbondale
Office of Research Development and Administration
Carbondale, IL 62901
(618) 453-2311

Kansas

Self-Determination Through Group Action Planning
Emma Longan Anderson, Kim Seaton, and Patricia Dinas (the authors)
Full Citizenship, Inc.
211 East 8th Street, Suite F
Lawrence, KS 66044
(913) 749-0603

Kentucky

Transition to Independence Project
Phyllis Shaikun
Spina Bifida Association of Kentucky
Kosair Charities Centre
928 Eastern Parkway
Louisville, KY 40217
(502) 637-1010

Maryland

Self-Determination Program for Transitioning Youth in Prince George's County
Jack E. Campbell
Prince George's County
Private Industry Council, Inc.
1802 Brightseat Road
Landover, MD 20785
(301) 386-5522

Michigan

Skills and Knowledge for Self-Determination
Sharon Field
Wayne State University
College of Education, Office of the Dean
Detroit, MI 48202
(313) 577-1638

Minnesota

Facilitating the Self-Determination of Youths with Disabilities
Brian Abery
Institute on Community Integration
107 Pattee Hall
150 Pillsbury Drive SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
(612) 625-5592

New Hampshire

A Student-Directed Model for the Promotion of Self-Determination
Laurie E. Powers, PhD
Dartmouth/N.H. UAP
Hood Center for Family Support
Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center
Medical Circle Drive
Lebanon, NH 03756
(603) 650-4419

New Mexico

Self-Determination: The Road to Personal Freedom
Dale Carter Ludi
Protection and Advocacy Systems
1720 Louisiana NE, Suite 204
Albuquerque, NM 87031
(505) 294-5150

New York

A Demonstration Project to Identify and Teach Skills Necessary for Self-Determination
Susan Kimmel, PhD
National Center for Disability Services
201 IU Willets Road
Albertson, NY 11507
(516) 747-5400

Demonstration Project to Identify and Teach Skills Necessary for Self-Determination
Dr. Dennis E. Mithaug
Teachers College, Columbia University
515 West 120th Street (Box 223)
New York, NY 10027
(212) 678-3859

Oregon

Development of a Life Decisions Strategies Curriculum to Promote Self-Determination
Ann Fullerton
Portland State University
Department of Special & Counselor Education
P.O. Box 751
Portland, OR 97207
(503) 725-4254

Enhancing Self-Determination Skills of Young Adults with Developmental Disabilities
Elizabeth Torin
Lane County Direction Service
99 West 10th, Suite 337D
Eugene, OR 97403
(503) 344-3707

Tennessee

Self-Determination Project
Karen D. Hampton-Young
People First of Tennessee, Inc.
2943 McNairy Lane
P.O. Box 121211
Nashville, TN 37212-1211
(334) 256-8002

Texas

Self-Determination Curriculum Project
Michael Wehmeyer
The Arc
500 E. Border Street, Suite 300
Arlington, TX 76010
(817) 261-6003

Utah

It's My Life
Emilee Curtis
New Hats, Inc.
148 E. 5065 So. #6
P.O. Box 57567
Salt Lake City, UT 84157
(801) 268-9811

Washington

Self-Determination Initiative
Chris Curry and Donna Lowary
People First of Washington-Families Together
P.O. Box 648
Clarkston, WA 99403
(509) 758-1123

Curriculum-Based Self-Determination Project
Joseph J. Stowitschek
University of Washington
Experimental Education Unit, WJ-10
Seattle, WA 98195
(206) 543-4011

Washington, DC

Project PARTnership
David D. McKinney, PhD
VSA Educational Services
1331 F Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 628-8080

Books, Curricula, and Videos

A Conceptual Framework for Enhancing Self-Determination
Author: B. Abery
Publishers: Paul H. Brookes, Baltimore, MD (1994)

A Guide to Enhancing the Self-Determination of Transition-Age Youth with Disabilities
Authors: B. Abery, A. Eggebeen, E. Rudrud, K. Ardnt, & L. Tetu
Publishers: Institute on Community Integration, Minneapolis, MN (1994)

Self-advocacy: Four Easy Pieces
Producer/Distributor: Advocating Change Together (1993)

Your Perfect Right: A Guide to Assertive Living
Author: R. E. Alberti, & M. L. Emmons
Publisher: Impact Publishers, San Luis Obispo, CA (1987)

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem
Author: R. Bean
Publishers: ETR Associates, Santa Cruz, CA (1992)

The Social Meaning of Mental Retardation
Author: R. Bogdon, & S. Taylor
Publisher: University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Canada (1982)

Consumer Roles in Society
Publisher/Distributor: The University of Missouri-Kansas City Institute for Human Development (1989)

Intrinsic Motivation and Self-determination in Human Behavior
Author: E. L. Deci, & R. M. Ryan
Publisher: Plenum Press, New York (1985)

We are People First
Author: J. Edwards
Publisher: Ednick, Inc., Portland, OR (1982)

The Self-Advocacy Workbook
Author: N. Gardner (1980)

Learning to Get Along: Social Effectiveness Training for People with Developmental Disabilities
Author: D. A. Jackson, N. F. Jackson, M. L. Bennett, D. M. Bynum, & E. Faryna
Publisher: Research Press, Champaign, IL (1991)

Skill Lessons and Activities: Getting Along with Others
Author: N. F. Jackson, D. A. Jackson, & C. Monroe
Publisher: Research Press, Champaign, IL (1983)

Building a Positive Self-Concept: 113 Activities for Adolescents
Author: M. Jacobs, B. Turk, & E. Horn
Publisher: J. Weston Walch, Portland, ME (1988)

Locus of Control
Author: H. M. Lefcourt
Publisher: Lawrence Erlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ (1976)

The Right to Self-Determination
Author: B. Nirje, In W. Wolfensberger's The principle of normalization in human services (pp. 176-193).
Publisher: National Institute on Mental Retardation, Toronto, Canada (1972)

Living Your Own Life
Author: PACER (1994)

Circle of Friends
Author: R. Perske
Publisher: Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN (1988)
Getting to Yes
Author: R. Fisher & W. Ury
Publisher: Penguin Books (1991)

Together Successfully
Author: J. E. Rynders, & S. J. Schleien
Publisher: The Arc National Headquarters, Arlington, TX (1991)

Self-Determination Across the Life Span: Theory and Practice
Author: D. Sands, & M. Wehmeyer
Publisher: Paul H. Brookes, Baltimore, MD (In press)

Life Lessons for Young Adolescents: An Advisory Guide for Teachers
Author: F. Schrumpf, S. Freiburg, & D. Skadden
Publisher: Research Press, Champaign, IL (1993)

Helplessness: On Depression, Development and Death
Author: M. Seligman
Publisher: W. H. Freeman, New York (1975)

Learned Optimism
Author: M. Seligman
Publisher: Alfred A. Knopf, New York (1990)

Building Self-Advocacy in the Community: A Model Workshop to Begin a Self-Advocacy Group
Author: The Arc of the United States
Publisher: The Arc, Arlington, TX (1989)

Making Job Opportunities for Mentally Retarded People a Reality
Author: The Arc of the United States
Publisher: The Arc, Arlington, TX (1980)

Self-Advocacy Programs Directory
Author: The Arc of the United States
Publisher: The Arc, Arlington, TX (1990)

Families, Professionals, and Exceptionality: A Special Partnership
Author: A. P. Turnbull, & H. R. Turnbull
Publisher: Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, OH (1986)

Articles

National Profile of Self-Help/Self-Advocacy Groups of People with Mental Retardation
Author: P. Browning, E. Thorin, & C. Rhoades
Journal: Mental Retardation, 22, 226-230, (1984)

The Changing Role of the People First Advisor
Author: C. Curtis
Journal: American Rehabilitation, 10, 6-9, (1984)

The Importance of Motivation for the Future of the LD Field
Author: E. L. Deci, & C. L. Chandler
Journal: Journal of Learning Disabilities, 19, 587-594, (1986)

Concepts and Issues Related to Choice-Making and Autonomy among Persons with Severe Disabilities
Author: D. Guess, H. A. Benson, & E. Siegel-Causey
Journal: Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 10, 79-86, (1985)

Positive Life Events, Attributional Style, and Hopefulness: Testing a Model of Recovery from Depression
Author: D. J. Needles & L. Y. Abramson
Journal: Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 99, 156-165, (1990)

The Many Facets of Self-Determination
Author: M. J. Ward
Journal: NICHCY Transition Monitor, p. 2, (1988)

Self-Determination Revisited: Going Beyond Expectations
Author: M. Ward
Journal: Transition Summary, 7, 3-5, (1991)

Self-Determination and the Education of Students with Mental Retardation
Author: M. Wehmeyer
Journal: Education and Training in Mental Retardation, 27, 302-314, (1992)

Self-Determination and the Education of Students with Mental Retardation
Author: M. Wehmeyer
Journal: Education and Training in Mental Retardation, 12, 302-314, (1992)

Self-Determination: Critical Skills for Outcome-Oriented Transition Services
Author: M. Wehmeyer
Journal: Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education, 15, 3-7, (1992)

Development of Self-Regulation in Persons with Mental Retardation
Author: T. L. Whitman
Journal: American Journal on Mental Retardation, 94, 373-376, (1990)

Toward a Theory of Learned Hopefulness: A Structural Model Analysis of Participation and Empowerment
Author: M. A. Zimmerman
Journal: Journal of Research in Personality, 24, 71-86, (1990)

IMPACT: Feature Issue on Self-Determination
Journal: IMPACT, 6, 1-20, (1993/94)

National Information and Advocacy Groups

The Arc National Headquarters
500 E. Border, Suite 300
Arlington, TX 76010
(817) 261-6003
(817) 277-0553 TDD

Beach Center on Families and Disability
3111 Haworth Hall
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66045
(913) 864-7600 voice, TDD

Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 620-3660

National Association for Minorities with Disabilities
3508 West North Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53208
(414) 442-0522

National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
900 Second St. NE, Suite 211
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 408-9514

National Center for Youth with Disabilities
University of Minnesota
Box 721-UMHC
Harvard Street at East River Road
Minneapolis, MN 55455
(800)333-6293

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY)
P.O. Box 1492
Washington, DC 20013
(800) 999-5599

National Organization on Disability
910 16th Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006
(800) 248-2253